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DR. JAMES BURRELL ANGELL submitted his resignation of the presidency of the University of Michigan on February 17, to take effect at the close of the academic year, and the board of regents created the office of chancellor and offered it to him at a salary of \$4,000 a year with the continued use of the president's house. Dr. Angell, who on January 7 last celebrated his eightieth birthday, has been head of the university since 1871, when he came from the presidency of the University of Vermont.

THE methods by which even our best daily papers are edited are illustrated by the fact that the *New York Sun*, on February 18, contained an article, the headlines of which announced that the presidency of the University of Michigan had been offered to Professor Jenks, of Cornell University, whereas in the article itself it was stated that no selection had been made. The *New York Times*, of February 20, contained an editorial article congratulating Professor Finley on his call to the presidency of the University of Michigan, and expressing hope that he would not go, especially on account of his admirable after-dinner speeches, whereas the news columns contained the statement that President Finley had denied that such a call had been made.

It is announced that Miss Agnes Irwin will resign the deanship of Radcliffe College at the close of the present academic year.

At Yale University, Professor L. P. Breckenridge, of the University of Illinois, has been appointed professor of mechanical engineering and Dr. W. R. Coe has been promoted to a full professorship of biology.

THE council of New York University announces the appointment of J. Edmund Woodman as professor of geology and director of the geological museum, to fill the vacancy caused by the retirement of Professor John J. Stevenson; and of Holmes Condict Jackson to be professor of physiology and director of the laboratory of physiology in the University and Bellevue Hospital Medical College, to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Pro-

fessor Graham Lusk. Professor Woodman received the degree of doctor of science from Harvard in 1904 and is now professor of geology at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada. Professor Jackson received the degree of doctor of philosophy from Yale University in 1899, and was instructor in physiological chemistry in the Sheffield Scientific School for three years. After study abroad he received an appointment as instructor in physiological chemistry in New York University, and became assistant professor in 1903. In 1905 he resigned to accept a position as adjunct professor in experimental physiology and physiological chemistry and director of the laboratories in the Albany Medical College, which position he now holds.

R. H. WHITEBECK, of Adelphi College, Trenton, N. J., has been appointed associate professor of geography and physiography at the University of Wisconsin, beginning with the next academic year.

SIR T. H. HOLLAND, F.R.S., director of the Geological Survey of India, has accepted the offer of the chair of geology at Manchester University vacated by Professor Boyd Dawkins, F.R.S. Dr. W. H. Lang has been appointed Barker professor in cryptogamic botany and Dr. Marie C. Stopes special lecturer in palæobotany.

#### DISCUSSION AND CORRESPONDENCE

##### APPOINTMENTS IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE: It has for several years been a question of absorbing interest to me whether our American methods of making university appointments might not be much improved, especially in view of the fact that much better methods are in operation in other countries. It was a pleasant surprise to me to notice that others were agitating the same question, as is made evident by the discussion begun by Professor Wenley and continued by Professor Miller in *SCIENCE* of August 21 and October 23, respectively. It seemed to me that the time was ripe for some action on this matter. I therefore seized the opportunity of presenting my views

to my colleagues of the Chicago Section of the American Mathematical Society, assembled in an informal way at a dinner on January 1, in connection with the regular meeting of that body. I enclose a copy of the remarks which I made upon that occasion. Let me supplement these remarks with the statement that a committee of the Chicago Section has been appointed to investigate the matter more closely and to report at the next meeting. The committee consists of Messrs. T. F. Holgate (Northwestern), E. B. Van Vleck (Wisconsin), L. E. Dickson (Chicago), A. G. Hall (Michigan) and E. J. Wilczynski (Illinois).

*Mr. Toastmaster and Gentlemen:* It is a difficult task which I have to fulfill to-night, to hold your attention after a hard day's work of mathematical deliberation, at a time when the average man seeks repose in friendly conversation. But I shall not attempt to excuse myself, and hope that you will pardon this rather unusual proceeding on account of the interest and the importance of the subject.

We have come together as mathematicians, but most of us are at the same time men in academic life and as such are naturally eager to examine our existing institutions, to inquire whether they are the best conceivable under the circumstances, and if not, to attempt to improve them.

I doubt whether it is necessary for me to spend much time upon an attempt to convince you that all is not as it should be in our American methods of university appointments. We all know of cases where these methods have failed to accomplish the best results, namely, to secure the best man available at a given time for a position then open.

Many of our universities and colleges make honest efforts to solve this problem for themselves, and would probably welcome any movement which would assist them in its solution. Others are indifferent, while still others almost openly practise favoritism of the rankest kind. Many of our smaller institutions rely to a considerable extent upon recommendations made by larger and more influential universities, and the latter have a tendency, quite pardonable under our system, of recommending only their own graduates. Again many of these same universities in filling vacancies in their own staff, never would consider a candidate unless he had been one of their own students. The question of personal acquaintance counts too much; whether a man is a good fellow,

or a man of conservative political and religious beliefs, whether his personal appearance is prepossessing, or whether his social attainments render him desirable, all of these questions are quite frequently weighed more carefully in the balance than these others: is the man a scholar, and can he teach? If he is a scholar, unless he has some good friends to speak for him, the presumptions are all against him. It is assumed almost as a matter of course that he can not be also a good teacher, and it seems practically certain that he can have no executive ability. Unless the photographer has been especially kind to him, his looks will probably not be satisfactory.

To return, for a moment, to the question of teaching ability; this is certainly one of the important points to be considered in the making of many and perhaps most appointments. But what methods have we for obtaining any positive or reliable information on that point? I think you will all admit that in most cases the evidence on that score might as well be dismissed; it usually consists of the statement of a few persons who may or may not be qualified to judge, and who may or may not know anything about the qualifications of the candidate as a teacher.

I wish to pass in review, rapidly, the methods employed in other countries in making university appointments, so far as I have been able to discover them.

The German system is fairly familiar. The faculty concerned makes recommendations to the minister of public instruction. There is no systematic and public canvass for the purpose of ascertaining the best man; the responsibility of making the recommendation is not fixed upon any particular man or group of men, but upon the faculty as a whole. Since the deliberations of the faculty are not public, any criticism of an appointment once made can not with any degree of certainty be directed toward any particular member of that body. While the system is, I believe, far better than our own and has in most cases given good results, it has often worked great injustice, making possible discriminations for personal or other reasons which under a better system might have been avoided.

I wish I could speak to you about an English system. But my attempts to find out about it have only led me to conclude that no such thing exists. Each of the universities in Great Britain apparently has its own methods of procedure in selecting its officers of instruction; each of the colleges which forms a part of the university again

has a different system, and the methods vary considerably even within the same institution for appointments of different grades. My source of information, one of the professors of Cambridge University, assures me that it would be a very formidable task to attempt to enter upon a comparative study of the methods of appointment in the English universities. Speaking of Cambridge, he says: "Certainly, for any trustworthy information about this place, a small pamphlet (perhaps it might not be small) is required." Under these circumstances, I feel compelled, in my discussion, to cross the channel to France, where a very simple and effective method is in operation.

The instructing staff of a French university is composed of professors (*professeurs titulaires*), *chargés de cours*, whom we shall here call assistant professors for the sake of convenience, and *maîtres de conférences*, whom we shall call instructors. The latter conduct their courses under the direction of a professor, the subject being frequently assigned to them by such a professor. The assistant professor conducts his course independently, being temporarily in charge of a professorial chair; he therefore plays the part of a professor without having professorial rank. A limited number of these assistant professors may be appointed *professeurs-adjoints* (let us say associate professors). This distinction affects neither the character of their work nor their salary, but merely gives them the right to take part in the deliberations of the council of the faculty. This council, composed of the professors and associate professors, has jurisdiction over a number of questions in which the faculty is interested, among others those concerning appointments. An associate professor, however, has no right to vote on the appointment of a full professor. Certain other matters are decided by the whole faculty (*Assemblée de la Faculté*), composed of all of its members, including also the instructors.

If a professorial chair in a French faculty of science is vacant, the council of the faculty may or may not declare officially the existence of a vacancy, after which the chair is filled temporarily for a period of varying length by a *chargé de cours*. The minister of public instruction then inquires of the council whether it wishes the chair to be maintained, suppressed or transformed. If the chair is maintained or transformed, the candidates, who must be at least thirty years of age and in possession of the doctor's degree, are given twenty days to hand in their applications, publications, recommendations, etc. After the expira-

tion of this period the faculty presents a list of two names (first and second choice) to the minister of public instruction. But there exists a body called "*Section permanente du Conseil supérieure de l'Instruction publique*," composed of a number of scholars and high officials of the ministry of public instruction. This committee likewise presents a list of two names to the head of the department of public instruction, who may legally choose either name on either list. It is possible, therefore, that the new professor may not be one of those requested by the faculty. But such cases are very rare and arouse violent protests when they present themselves. Generally the first choice of the faculty is appointed.

There is no law requiring the minister of public instruction to consult the faculty in the appointment of assistant professors and instructors. As a matter of fact, however, this is always done, and except in one or two cases the wishes of the faculty have always been respected.

This system, which has some strong points, has given satisfaction. Still it does not seem to differ very materially from the German method, and seems to me to be much inferior to the Italian, which I shall now proceed to describe.

If a professorship in an Italian university is to be filled, the fact is advertised a long time beforehand in the official journal of the department of education, notices to this effect being also posted on the bulletin-boards of the various universities throughout the kingdom, as well as in other appropriate places. Anybody who thinks that he has any claim upon the position may apply. His application must be handed in by a certain date. It must include an account of his previous career, accompanied by the proper documents, diplomas, etc., a list of his publications and five copies of as many of these as possible. Most of the other documents are also required in five copies, for a reason which will immediately become apparent.

In the meantime the faculties of all of the universities of the kingdom are asked by the minister of public instruction to present him with a list of five men, these to be members of a committee whose purpose it shall be to judge the applications and to make a nomination. Each of the universities thus registers its choice as to the five men whom it considers the most competent judges in the case. They are, naturally, all specialists in the subject of the vacant professorship or else in closely allied subjects. These lists of five are again printed in the official journal. Five of the ten men who receive the highest number of

votes, the vote of each university counting as one, are then chosen by the minister of public instruction as members of the committee.

The responsibility for a selection now rests upon this committee. Each of the members individually examines the applications, and considers the relative merits of the candidates. Finally the committee meets as a whole in Rome and decides upon a first, second and third choice for the position. The minister of public instruction offers the position to the first choice; if he refuses, to the second, etc.

This system seems to me to eliminate, about as completely as any human contrivance may, the chances for injustice in an appointment. The complete publicity which attends the various steps in the proceedings, the fixing of the responsibility for a recommendation upon a committee of five of the most representative men of their profession, the democratic and in every way admirable manner of selecting these men, seem to give an absolute guarantee of the wisdom of the final choice. In fact it has worked admirably in practise, and it seems to me that this Italian system is the one which we ought to attempt to adapt to our needs in this country.

Gentlemen, I hope that the discussion of this evening will bear some fruit. If in our country there existed a central authority controlling all of our universities, we might make an effort to have such a system of appointments introduced by law. We are compelled to resort to a slower process, that of forcing a gradual change from our present methods by educating public opinion. But we are members of a great national organization, the American Mathematical Society, and I am going to ask you to support a motion to appoint a committee to investigate the possibility of improving the methods of appointments in our colleges and universities as far as mathematicians are concerned. I hope that you will support the motion; I hope that this committee will find a satisfactory solution of the problem, and that finally other national learned societies will follow our example, so as to improve the status of the American professor not only in mathematics, but in all other subjects.

To show you more in detail what kind of questions such a committee might investigate, I will give a few examples. Do not misunderstand me. I am not attempting to legislate for the committee, I do not hold tenaciously to any of the propositions which I am now going to advance. Their only purpose is to show that there are cer-

tain features of this problem which a society like ours can attack with some degree of success, and which would form a legitimate, if difficult, portion of its work.

Would it not be desirable, for instance, if every mathematical vacancy occurring in any of our colleges or universities were advertised in the *Bulletin*, accompanied by a statement of title and salary, grade, character and amount of work, as well as the date of appointment? It may seem very difficult, but may it not be possible to devise a scheme by means of which the society could put at the service of any institution requesting it, its advice in regard to the filling of any particular position? This might be done by means of a committee appointed for this purpose from year to year, or as in the Italian system for the making of one particular appointment. Several such committees might be appointed for the different regions of our country, whose vastness, of course, is one of the great difficulties to be overcome in the working out of such a system.

I have tried your patience long enough. I shall be satisfied if I have convinced you of the wisdom, not of any of the particular things which I have mentioned, but of the general policy of taking this matter under consideration. It is my honest opinion that the American Mathematical Society can render signal service to the cause of education and science in this manner. I feel convinced that it is our duty as free and independent men, as citizens of the academic world to take this step, which may lead toward a better condition of affairs, where merit will receive its just reward, where all proceedings will be open and frank, where there will be no place for incompetence and injustice.

E. J. WILCZYNSKI

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#### GENERA WITHOUT SPECIES

NOTWITHSTANDING the great value of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, and the care with which it has been compiled, there remain several important points upon which those professing to follow the code are disagreed. In part, these are due to deliberate omissions, resulting from the impossibility of securing unanimity; but some of them are supposed to be covered by the code, and yet opposite interpretations are made by good authorities. Probably the most serious question of the latter sort relates to generic